

and it is safe and it is a part of the body politic of the whole country's ownership?

Now, how can they possible think that it is for the well-being of the American populace to have our land that we own as a body politic full of drug dealers, rapists, and prostitute smugglers? Why in the world won't they open the roads up to our law enforcement to go in there and stop this?

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. The gentleman, if I may, asks a pertinent question, a two-part question. First, I wish the Federal Government didn't own quite so much land; I would be happier with that. But if they are going to take control of that land, they have to take control of that land.

In deference to some within the Department of the Interior and Forest Service, because once again I think common sense would say if people were of like mind and people were of good purposes, they should be able to sit down and work these situations out. This is not rocket science. This should be common sense. But in deference to some of them, the law to which they look for guidance says they have to manage it for wilderness designation and endangered species aspects first. That is the way they are interpreting it. I personally think they could reinterpret that very easily administratively if they chose. But that is the interpretation, which is one of the other reasons I think the law that we have proposed, the law that passed in the Senate but didn't get over here, that we passed over here but didn't pass in the Senate, needs to be put in place so we make it very, very clear that on these public lands, indeed, public security is the number one priority, and that we want to stop the drugs and the violence from coming across here.

Mr. CARTER. And to yield to another question: Isn't it a fact that the kind of people that they are letting in there without any law enforcement being able to stop them are not what you would call good citizens for taking care of the wilderness nor good citizens for protecting endangered species?

Look at that picture you are holding up there: bottles, cans, clothing. It looks like the city dump outside of the city here. Now, is that protecting our wilderness?

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. That's the irony of the situation in which we find ourselves. The very land we are trying to protect is the land that is being destroyed by people who don't care about the quality and purpose of the land. And this is what we must stop. This is, unfortunately, what the reality of today is. And that is sad. And it should be one of the reasons why our policies should be very clear and very open, and why, when you talk to people, they shake their heads in amazement, because this just does not make common sense.

I think you may have some statistics about that.

Mr. CARTER. Just real quickly, we have this issue with the Arizona law.

And I think everyone says that the Arizona law really is an outcry from Arizonans saying: if you are not going to do it, we are all going to get involved.

But maybe the administration is setting a policy or a mindset here that is causing some of these things, because public opinion versus the opinion of our Speaker and our President seem to go in opposite directions.

Public opinion, and I believe that after they heard what you said tonight, they would even say it louder, they would say: my Lord, if we are not enforcing our borders and all this horrible stuff is happening down there, somebody has got to. And I don't blame Arizona for saying we want to have the right to ask questions.

So look at these polls: 51 percent, Gallup 59 approved; McClatchy Newspaper 61 approved; Fox News 61 approve. And yet President Obama; Attorney General Eric Holder; the Secretary of State, Posner; and the Department spokeswoman, P.J. Crowley, all seem to take the position that this is some horrible infringement upon goodness and mercy and the Constitution of the United States.

Well, maybe we have got to get our minds set straight. We have got to start realizing that our job as Members of this Congress, this whole body, we take an oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. And in that Constitution, it tells us one of our responsibilities is to defend our Nation against all enemies.

These are enemies of our country. If you don't believe it, I will be glad to take you down to places in Texas where the abuse of the drugs that are killing our children are clear to be seen on the streets, and you tell me if that's not an attack on our country for those drugs to come pouring in here. And you tell me the rapes are not an attack. Maybe it is happening to poor innocent people from foreign lands getting smuggled in here, but the rapes are taking place in the United States; and that aggravated sexual assault is taking place on those hundreds of women. That is a serious felony offense in every jurisdiction in this country. And we know it is going on, and we are using regulations to hold the hands of those who would protect those innocents. It drives you nuts to listen to this stuff.

□ 2200

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I appreciate your emphasis on the public attitude there. I do not have a window into the hearts of what Arizona legislators may or may not have done. But in the back of my mind, I cannot keep telling myself, or I cannot keep wondering, that if we as a Federal Government had actually taken charge of our southern border and our northern border, if we as a Federal Government had stopped the most heinous of individuals who are freely coming in here now, perhaps the anxiety level or the anger level would not have made necessary the

particular Arizona statute. Now, that's pure speculation on my part as well. But I cannot help thinking that if we were doing our jobs and getting all of the government agencies—Interior, Ag, Forest Service, and Homeland Security—to work together and do the right thing for people, just to take a commonsense approach, that we would lower at least the rhetoric of the discussion, and we would raise the security feeling of people, and maybe people like Rob Krentz would be alive today to be with his family.

Mr. CARTER. Well, I thank the gentleman for coming down here and actually enlightening me on some facts that I was not aware of because, like I say, we retain our public lands in Texas. So we look at Texas, the issues—it's just as serious on the Texas border, but it's a different issue on the Texas border. But they're all serious. The incursions into Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California are getting worse every time they occur, and it's time for us to unite and defend our borders.

We need an immigration policy that works. I'm for that. I think everyone is. But I'm not for rewarding criminal behavior. I will never be rewarding criminal behavior. We need to stop the border and seal it up and then come up with an immigration policy that is fair and takes into mind that the law has a purpose in this country. It is the glue that holds this society together.

I thank my friend for coming and joining me.

#### THE OIL SPILL HAS NOT REACHED FLORIDA'S COAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DRIEHAUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for half the remaining time until midnight.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it's an honor to come before the House, and as you know, I am no stranger to the floor when it comes down to addressing the House about issues that are not only facing the State of Florida but also facing the country.

You know that we have had a number of incidents that have taken place in the gulf in recent years, Hurricane Katrina and other storms like it, and now we have a threat to not only our environment but also the economy of the Gulf States. Tonight I have come to address some of the issues that are facing the State of Florida right now.

Everyone knows of the effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. They also understand what they see on the news every night of not only environmentalists but also scientists and responders to the incident and what they're doing. America is being educated on what's going on. Our water is deep. It's 5,000 feet.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I just recently left the gulf coast area. I had an opportunity in my own State to be in

Tampa and then moving on up to Panama City and the cities in between Panama City and Pensacola. I had the opportunity to meet with some good Floridians, and I picked up some firsthand ideas on what we can do to be able to stabilize not only the economy but also do away with some of the rumors that are out there that are affecting the overall economic outlook for that particular area. I also, after leaving Pensacola, went to the command center there in Mobile, Alabama, and had an opportunity to meet with some of the coordinators that are there on behalf of the Coast Guard, also coordinators for the State of Florida, coordinators also for the recovery effort as it relates to oil companies.

I just want to say from the outset, Mr. Speaker, that those that are responsible for this spill, need it be BP or Halliburton or the number of other companies that have been named, I guarantee you this, that response will not go without them paying. And I think it's very, very important that everyone on this House floor understands that many people have been affected due to the lack of regulation, need it be from the regulatory agency not doing what they should do. And I know that this Congress will find out more about what did happen and did not happen and the mismanagement that took place, but also as it relates to BP, Halliburton, and others' responsibility of what they were supposed to do to make sure that this did not happen.

Because they were irresponsible—we have individuals that work paycheck by paycheck. Some individuals work cash jobs. Some families have been fishing there in the gulf for a very long time, and they have been affected. I've talked to fishermen in Panama City, and I have also talk to fishermen in Pensacola and those that are concerned about the perception that's out there. We do not have oil on the beaches in Florida; we don't have oil within the Florida waters in Florida. But somehow, somehow, the perception has been that there's oil on the beach, and I can tell you that it's affected the economy of those communities.

I just want to share with the Members that it's very important that we not only get out accurate information but we use every tool we can. And meeting with those fishermen in Panama City where their boats were there in the slips, they're usually out on the water catching fish, but people have canceled their reservations because they feel that the water is unsafe to fish in. That is not the case. Those are some of the things that I'm going to talk about here today.

These communities are already hit. And I want to make sure that Americans understand that they can come to Florida and they can vacation there and they should not cancel their reservations, because it will be affecting the economy not only in Florida but for individuals that work hard every day, that were already on their knees

as it relates to an economic slowdown that we're experiencing right now. Now we see fishermen who were saying that they had their books filled all through the snapper season to only find that many individuals are canceling, and corporations that had planned retreats down in the panhandle area from Apalachicola right on up to Escambia County decided to cancel their reservations.

So maybe we can do away with some of the myths that are out there. This is not just about the fishermen. It's about the hotel industry. It's about the tourism industry in Florida that holds our economy as being the number one spot in creating jobs.

I have some charts here, Mr. Speaker, and it talks about the \$65 billion that tourism generates in the State of Florida. And I can tell you, just recreational saltwater fishing impacts Florida's economy \$5 billion, over 50,000 jobs, and I think it's very, very important that everyone understands the economy in Florida is already some 11.3 and above as it relates to unemployment. Some of the communities that are involved—and I will talk about the unemployment rates that are there as we move along, and people who feel sorry for those individuals that are impacted, I can tell you, you can do something about it. You can go down to that area and enjoy yourself. I think it's important. Come down to Florida.

I also want to also just share a few other statistical data that I have here. "Boating impacts Florida's economy with over \$18 billion and over 220,000 jobs." "Florida averages over 35 million fishing trips per year," and, unfortunately, that industry is hurting, as I described earlier. I think that a number of folks need to understand that many of these fishing families that are along that coastline, I think they're too small to fail.

We talk about "too big to fail" when we look at the financial industry. These individuals are the reason why hotel rooms are filled there and the reason why the restaurants have individuals that are walking in and out of them and the reason why people come to that neck of the woods. And I think it's important that everyone understands what we're facing here.

This is some statistical data that I have already mentioned here, but I think it's important that everyone understands that in Florida we're trying to do everything we can. I met with a hotel owner that said that she has over 40 rooms but only seven reservations. She has a staff that's over 35 individuals, but I know that she's going to have to lay some folks off. That's not because of any act against our country, but there is an environmental perception that the beaches in Panama City have oil on them and that folks can't come down and enjoy themselves.

When I met with them, I said, Listen, I've already filed legislation with Senator BILL NELSON over in the Senate to

call for a moratorium until we figure out how we can make these rigs safe and to make sure that there's a moratorium on expansion of offshore oil drilling off the coast of Florida and in the Gulf of Mexico. That's already filed. Legislation is already filed. RUSH HOLT, the Congressman here, in a companion bill over in the Senate, moving the liability cap up to make sure that these oil companies do not get off the hook for the kind of misery that they have put on these individuals who just wanted to work every day.

□ 2210

I shared with them what the SBA is providing for small businesses. But I can tell you in the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, they said, KENDRICK, if you can go back to Congress and let folks know that they can come down here, we are open for business and that we are ready to receive them, that will help us more than everything that you just mentioned. Everything you just mentioned will be for the future, but for right now, they have mortgages to meet. They can't take a second on their home because they have already taken that second mortgage on their home. They don't have the money to be able to continue to make that payment for the slip that they have at the marina. They have bills that they have to meet. And I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it is important. As a Member of Congress, that is the least I can do, to come to the floor tonight and stand up on behalf of the individuals who need someone to stand up on their behalf.

These are some of the guys I met with there in Panama City. As a fisherman myself, I get excited just looking at this picture. I am looking at some king mackerel and grouper and redfish, and I even see a parrot fish. These are the fishermen that are out there. These are some of the guys that I met with that are ready to go to work, but people are canceling on them and saying there is oil in the water. There is not oil in the water.

These pictures were just taken last week. This was not taken 6 months ago. They wanted to take this picture to let people know that they can come down and fish, ready, set, go, and clean. Stay a couple of days and enjoy yourself. It is a seasonal community along this gulf coast area, especially along the panhandle of Florida. They only have 100 to 120 days. They have the most fluctuating economy in the State of Florida because it is seasonal, and I think it is very, very important that we support these individuals.

These individuals are affected because of the lack of responsibility of those who are responsible for oil that is gushing out on the bottom of the gulf right now. I think it is important when we look at leadership that we understand that the economy is going to be affected time after time again when individuals are irresponsible. One, by not standing up as leaders when they are

supposed to stand up as leaders and to be consistent and, two, turning their back and not paying attention to the details. I will go back to that, but I think it is important. I am going to bring the fishing picture back up again and I like it.

Visitflorida.com is a Web site that you can go to. I think it is important that you understand you can go to this Web site, get accurate information, and on the Web site you have key points, key areas you can click on, and it lets you know Twitter updates on what is going on on that particular beach in that part of Florida. I think it is important that you understand that coming to Florida for many individuals who are hit by hard times, you don't have the opportunity to get on a plane and fly overseas. It is cheaper to come down.

Here is where the rubber meets the road. I am going to spend a little time on this map because I think it is important. When we look at our economy, it is not only the Florida economy, it is the U.S. economy. This is Deepwater Horizon's project right there. This is where the incident took place. This map was updated by NOAA as of 6 p.m. today. I think it is important that you understand this red line is the red line of the area that is shut off. This has very little to do with the area I am talking about, from Apalachicola over to Pensacola, you can see this little black line here, the Florida waters that Florida has jurisdiction over, where there is a proposal to call a special session to put in the State Constitution calling for no oil drilling around the State of Florida as it relates to our Constitution. That would be a good move because what is happening right now, our economy is being affected and will be affected. We will not have the resources that we need to deal with schools and health care, a number of other issues that the State has to take responsibility for.

I am filing bills and giving voice to those individuals that I met with that said Listen, if you can do everything you can to help us, it would help us be able to bounce back.

This area right here is the area that was shut down as of 6 p.m. today. This is only 19 percent of the gulf, and this is very, very deep water. The only kind of fishing going on out there is tuna fishing. The fish that you saw and the chart before that are caught in this area, where these boats are going out right here. So it has nothing to do with this. And believe me, the Department of Health will let you know these areas are shut down, and they are not open for fishing.

I know there was some rumor—it wasn't rumor, it was fact; some tar balls were found by the Florida Keys. Those are being analyzed. Being a Florida guy, I can tell you, you get a little tar every now and then. It may not be from the Deepwater Horizon project, who knows. But we don't want hysteria going throughout saying there is oil

down in the Keys now. We don't know that as a fact. I think it is very important that we understand that.

I can tell you one thing: As much as I fought against offshore oil drilling in the State of Florida, around the State of Florida, I can tell you I am just as concerned as some, but it is not for alarm; that beach is still open.

This little chart here is just in case people don't want to take my word for it. You can go on to Grandpanamabeachrentals.com. This is a Web cam just to let you know that the beach is open—ready, set, go for visitors. I think that is something that is very, very important that people need to understand.

Now to get to the bread and butter here, Mr. Speaker. I think it is important. You've been hearing a lot about how we are trying to shut this oil down, how the Coast Guard is a part of that, the EPA, BP, and a number of other agencies. But I can tell you where the rubber meets the road. This Apalachicola area all of the way to Escambia County, you have the counties that are already affected by unemployment. Wakulla County is 7.2 percent unemployment. Gadsden County also has individuals living up in this area, the panhandle we call northwest Florida, that are affected by 9.6 percent unemployment. Liberty County has 5.3 percent unemployment; Franklin County, 7.1 percent unemployment; Gulf County, 9.8 percent unemployment; Calhoun County, 8.2 percent unemployment; Jackson County has 7.2 percent unemployment. Bay County has 8.9 percent unemployment; and Washington County, also up here in the panhandle area, has 9.6 percent unemployment. Holmes County, 7.2 percent unemployment; Walton County, 6.8 percent unemployment; Okaloosa County, 7.2 percent unemployment; Santa Rosa County, 9.4 percent unemployment; and Pensacola has 9.8 percent unemployment.

I say all of that, ladies and gentlemen, because if we don't kill this whole issue that we have oil on the beaches of Florida, those unemployment numbers that I just mentioned are going to get higher. That is not fiction; that is fact. I think it is important that we understand that even though BP and Halliburton and all of these other companies that took advantage of what they were supposed to do and put these individuals in a financial situation that they are not even going to be able to provide for their families, I want those families to know that we are going to do everything we can, at least I am as a Member of Congress, to make sure that these individuals pay.

That is not going to put any food on the table, not right now, but I tell you one thing: That if we don't do our part, as individuals not living in the area that I just mentioned, to make sure that we do everything that we can to support those Floridians and also those Americans, then shame on us. We need to be able to stand up for them.

I think it is also important to understand, we talk about this issue of offshore oil drilling. It is okay to be against it now that you have oil in the gulf. I understand Louisiana and New Orleans, there is a judge that is handling all of the court orders that are coming through. BP is trying to move that hearing to Houston. I wonder why. I guess for a more favorable kind of judge or environment so they can have that as the home base so they can be able to have influence over the jury pool or what have you.

□ 2220

We need to pay very close attention to what's happening. People are scared. People are concerned. Some people may be looking at it as a vacation situation. We have folks that I just mentioned trying to give some representation here tonight that are directly affected. They have children too. They have mortgages too. They have car notes too and boat notes too. And they have to make ends meet.

Exxon Valdez is the only thing that we can really point to to see the outcome measures of what happened to a community when there was an oil spill.

Now, I commend those workers that are out there trying to rally up and round up this oil off the top of the water. I commend them for their work. I went by their command center. There are a lot of great Americans that are working to try to save communities. The two Coast Guard individuals that I was with, the two captains, they both live in Santa Rosa County. They said, KENDRICK, I have a vested interest in making sure that this oil doesn't hit the beach. And they're out there working some 20-hour days, making sure that they're able to skim and burn and pick up this oil. But they can't get it all.

And it's not on the beaches of Florida, and I think it's very important that everyone understands that. And there are people that are working.

But I'll be doggone if we allow these oil executives to come to Congress with \$1,200 suits on and say they're not going to answer questions, and folks back home are suffering.

I think it's important that everyone understands that this is serious business. The clean-up of this Horizons project is going to take years, not months but years. And I think it's important that everyone understands, when we look at national security and we talk about green initiatives, that folks don't feel that it's some sort of liberal tree-hugging experience. China's doing it. India's doing it. Why do we have to be third or fourth as a country when we look at alternative fuel sources?

We talk about solar power. Folks think that's weak. I look at it as putting folks to work, maybe diversifying opportunities for these people that I've identified for those who have been fishing for generations and generations. Maybe they can have some other opportunities.

Biomass. I speak as a Congressman that has promoted biomass as it relates to our agricultural opportunities that we have and reusing sugar cane and reusing some of our crops as it relates to orange peels and others to turn them into energy, to put power back into the grid.

And to talk about solar power constantly, as coming from the Sunshine State, I talk about solar power because I see opportunities in it. I see homeowners being able to have the opportunity to save on their electric bill. But it's all about the transition. So if we continue to depend on fossil fuel, especially when it comes down to affecting the economy of so many Gulf State communities, communities along the Gulf States that are affected by this; and the dollars that are being deployed right now is something that we can prevent in the future.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to do my part here tonight. I wanted to make sure those individuals in this picture here, that I didn't let them down. I told them that I would bring voice to their issue as it relates to, which is my issue too, as it relates to the fact that people are canceling on these guys, and gals I must add.

And I just really want to thank Pamela Anderson for supplying this picture also at Anderson Marina. And they want to go to work, and we need to give them an opportunity to go to work.

But as we look at this issue, Mr. Speaker, it's important that as this Congress moves with the investigation and the legislation that I'm a prime sponsor of and cosponsor of, that's not enough. It's making sure that we're able to look at this situation as though it is a natural disaster, and the Federal response should treat it as though it is.

So we need to make sure that these individuals do not fail, because if we didn't let the banks fail, we should not let these individuals that work every day, pay taxes, and many of whom are veterans in this country, and they're Democrats and they're Republicans and Independent. I can tell you one thing about this oil spill. I don't care what your party affiliation is. The bottom line is the bottom line. And when 50 percent of your business is walk-ups, and that shuts down to 1 or 2 percent, and you have a boat that usually you're taking six people out on and now you're only taking one, and the other person happens to be your cousin, something is really wrong with that; and it's going to affect these families.

So I hope that as we move on, not only with the investigation, because we're an investigative body, but as we look at the effects that this oil spill has brought about, I think that we have to take into account what we're going through right now.

My heart goes out to my brethren in Alabama. My heart goes out to those that are in Mississippi. My heart goes out to Louisiana. I think it's very im-

portant that folks understand that this issue is just not a gulf issue. It's a United States issue, and it's a perfect example of why we need to move forward as it relates to alternative fuel and energy in our country so that we don't have to find ourselves in a situation where individuals are affected by some mishap that took place because individuals were irresponsible and brought about pain and suffering for these individuals that are trying to work and put food on the table for their families.

With that, Mr. Speaker, it was an honor to come to the floor. I want to let the membership know that many Members of the Florida delegation wanted to be here this evening; but due to the hour, they were not able to be here. The Florida delegation will be meeting tomorrow. When I say the Florida delegation, I'm saying the Members of the House and the Senate will come together to talk about this issue of Florida and its deep water Horizons oil spill. This directly affects our economy because our economy is all about tourism.

I hope in that Florida delegation meeting that there is a continued bipartisan spirit to not only help Florida bounce back, but also, as we move forward, as we look at energy, as policymakers, that we remember this moment, that we remember that all of Florida is going to be affected by the perception that there's oil in the water. And so it doesn't matter if you represent the west coast or you represent southern Florida or you represent the east coast of Florida or you're in the middle of Florida, every last one of those Members, the 27 members of the delegation, with two Senators, I think it's very, very important, including two Senators, I think it's very, very important that we remember this moment, remember the Floridians that are being affected, and the fact that our economy already, we're on our knees, and we're getting ready to get hit in the back of the head again if we don't cap this oil from coming out from the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, and we don't remember this moment as we move forward as it relates to our national energy policy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### SUPERVISION OF OFFSHORE DRILLING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend from Florida, his discussion about energy. It's certainly a timely topic.

I think we're all pretty upset with what BP has done. We heard the President point out that we're not going to have any finger-pointing. But that was yesterday. That was yesterday's news.

Then I understand today the White House announces that it's going to have a commission that's going to do the finger-pointing. So one day no finger-pointing, the next day we're going to have a commission to do the finger-pointing.

□ 2230

So I guess we know that nobody that comes in here would ever do anything but tell the truth, but whoever is sending out those messages sure is being inconsistent.

I heard the President say last week that he was tired of all the cozy relationships between Big Oil and government. Well, as long as Big Oil is being properly supervised, then we are okay. But the trouble is in the last year-and-a-half apparently things have not been going so well in the area of supervision. There is an article that the AP put out: Federal inspections on the rigs not as claimed. This was actually from Sunday, May 16.

This article indicates the Federal agency responsible for ensuring the Deepwater Horizon was operating safely before it exploded last month fell well short of its own policy that the rig be inspected at least once per month. The agency's inspection frequency on Deepwater Horizon fell dramatically over the past 5 years, and apparently in the last year-and-a-half that has dropped significantly.

According to the article, let's see, this indicates officials said 83 inspections had been performed since the rig arrived in the gulf 104 months ago, which was September of 2001. And then being questioned about the once per month claim, officials subsequently revised that total up to 88 inspections. And the number of more recent inspections changed from 26 to 48 since January of 2005. No explanation was given for the upward revisions.

But what's amazing to some of us is the fact that you could have a level 5 hurricane as existed in the gulf with Hurricane Katrina before it hit the coast of Louisiana—once it hit the coast it was a level 3, but out there at the rigs it was still a 5—and some of those platforms were completely destroyed, completely destroyed, but the blowout preventers worked. There was no oil leaked. So you wonder, What's the deal?

And relying on the old adage here in Washington that no matter how cynical you get it's never enough to catch up, begin thinking about the President deploring this cozy relationship between Big Oil and the government. Because if he is blowing smoke, then maybe there's fire there.

So we got to looking, as, after all, it is MMS, the Minerals Management Service of the Department of the Interior that's supposed to be monitoring British Petroleum and making sure that our environment's kept safe because we need the energy. My friend from Florida was talking about all the alternative energies. Well, that's going